THE "MOON" EMBOSSED TYPE FOR THE ADULT BLIND

Isabel W. Kennedy

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THE "MOON" EMBOSSED TYPE FOR THE ADULT BLIND

By ISABEL W. KENNEDY

William Moon lost his sight in 1840, when 21 years of age. His researches proved that the first attempt to provide a finger type so that the blind could read, was in 1575, by Francesco Lucas in Spain. The first book used by the blind was embossed in 1785.

By 1840, when Dr. Moon lost his sight, there had been at least five attempts to provide the blind with a finger reading type, but after trying all of them and finding them quite unsuitable for persons who had been accustomed to reading ink print before losing their sight, Dr. Moon began to construct a system of reading adapted to the needs of the 75% of all the blind who lose their sight after 60 years of age. Often these people have suffered serious illnesses, nerve wracking operations, loss of earning capacity, etc. and in order to once more enjoy reading they could easily do so by learning the simple nine characters of the Roman letters which, in different positions, form 24 letters of the Moon alphabet, only H P and Q being simple arbitrary signs and the whole of the reading having only four simple contractions.

Mr. W. H. Illingworth in his valuable book "The History of the Education of the Blind", said "The Braille System is a mystery to all but the initiated. The Roman letter is known wherever English, French and German are known. In a word, the Roman letter is known everywhere."

With the help of Sir Charles Lowther of Wilton Castle, England, (who was himself blind and, who read Moon type books when 90 years of age) The Moon Publishing House was established in Brighton, England in 1856, and the first Home Teaching Society in the entire world was started in London under the special patronage of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. In a short while 6,000 people who had been deprived of reading through blindness, were happily enjoying the Moon embossed books. By 1873, 80,000 volumes were being circulated, and by 1890, Dr. William Moon's Jubilee Year, there were 175,000 Moon embossed books in no less than 420

WILLIAM MOON, LLD.; F.R.G.S.

different languages and dialects being circulated, all of which were published in Brighton, England.

A large book containing specimens of Moon type in the 420 languages and dialects, as well as astronomical and geometrical maps, etc. was displayed at the booth of the Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society and Free Circulating Library for the Blind, at the Columbus Exhibition held in Chicago in 1893. By 1890, 1,080,000 books in Moon type had been circulated.

Dr. William Moon and his gifted son, Robert C. Moon, after traveling through Europe to bring LIGHT THROUGH LITERATURE to the adult blind, became widely known, and their efforts deeply appreciated.

In 1882 Dr. William Moon and his daughter, Miss Adelaide Moon visited America by urgent invitation from Philadelphia, bringing with them a large number of embossed books. The result was the Philadelphia Home Teaching Society was established in the Bible House at 7th and Walnut Streets, where for 16 years, Mr. John P. Rhoads carried on the

work of directing one Home Teacher, and loaning the Moon books. At that time the postage cost 1 cent for each 2 ounces, until 1905, when the United States Government granted the great boon of free postage for loaned embossed books, both ways, which greatly increased the circulation.

After Mr. Rhoads' death in 1898, the Philadelphia Home Teaching Society made an agreement with the Free Library of Philadelphia, which at that time, was on the north side of Chestnut Street, to place the embossed books owned by the Society in its care, and the first department for the blind in any Free Library in the United States was opened there, with the whole-hearted co-operation of the late John Thomson, A. M.; Litt. D. the Librarian, who later became the second President of the Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society, which had been incorporated in 1901.

Towards the end of 1904 Dr. Robert C. Moon (the son of William), who some years previously had opened an office in the Witherspoon Building, and was the Society's first Secretary, asked me to come into the work, for, as a highly trained ophthalmologist, and general practitioner, he had little time to give to his father's work in America, his father having returned to Brighton after a short visit here.

Dr. Robert C. Moon gave me an office to myself next to his reception room, and without any previous experience or training I tried to prove that his confidence in me was warranted. First, I asked the Chief of Police to request his men to turn in to me the names of any blind persons living on their "beats" and this permission was given.

When the 1905 Legislature of Pennsylvania met at Harrisburg I went there alone, interviewed everybody connected with the Appropriations Committee and all Representatives from Philadelphia, urging that we be enabled to do a double duty to the State by employing blind graduates of the two Penna. schools for the blind for the purpose of reaching and teaching entirely free of charge, the adult blind of the State. I stayed in Harrisburg two weeks and came back with the promise of our first State appropriation, $2,000.

In 1903 the Society's friends had started a $100,000. Publication Fund, "the object being to form an Endowment, the interest of which shall be devoted to the publication of new and interesting books in the Moon type for the blind".

Mrs. L. Webster Fox, wife of the noted Ophthalmologist who was a close friend of Dr. Robert C. Moon, wishing to increase the advantages of the adult blind, started raising a Christmas Book fund, which with the help of her friends, in 1914 amounted to $3821.

On February 13th, 1914, the blind of Pennsylvania lost one of their best friends in the death of Robert C. Moon, M. D., and I was appointed secretary in his place. Mrs. Fox then turned the Christmas Book fund raising over to me, and by 1932 I had secured by my letters $7,825., and I had the pleasure of selecting many of the books which were sterotyped and embossed in Moon type at that time.

To show the growth of interest among the adult blind, the circulation of embossed books in Philadelphia in 1900 was 2,326 volumes; in 1907, 10,094 volumes. By 1925, 24,988 volumes, all of which were circulated from The Free Library of Philadelphia, and were in Moon type. In 1931 five libraries in the United States were circulating embossed books, and their combined circulation of Moon type alone was 43,524 in that year.

A summary of the work of The Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society for the Blind from 1921 to 1931 showed 72,430 visits paid by blind Home Teachers directed by me, 22, 168 lessons were given, and 276,758 Moon type books alone were circulated, besides many in Braille,

The battle of the various dotted types for the blind came to a head at the 1917 Biennial Meeting of The American Association of Workers for the Blind held at Portland, Me. After a heated discussion English Braille was unanimously voted for. This was a great day for the young blind of America, for it opened to them the splendid opportunity of reading the best literature published in England and European countries in Braille.

In 1931 the Pennsylvania Legislature passed a Bill for $25,000. for maintenance of The Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society, but Governor Pinchot reduced it to $16,000. For the same size territory as Pennsyl-

vania, England at that time provided 430 Home Teachers and appropriated $132,995. a year.

The Moon Society in Brighton, England, has always been a purely philanthropic society and has charged the half cost only of stereotyping and embossing Moon type, and all embossed books have always come through the American Customs free of duty.

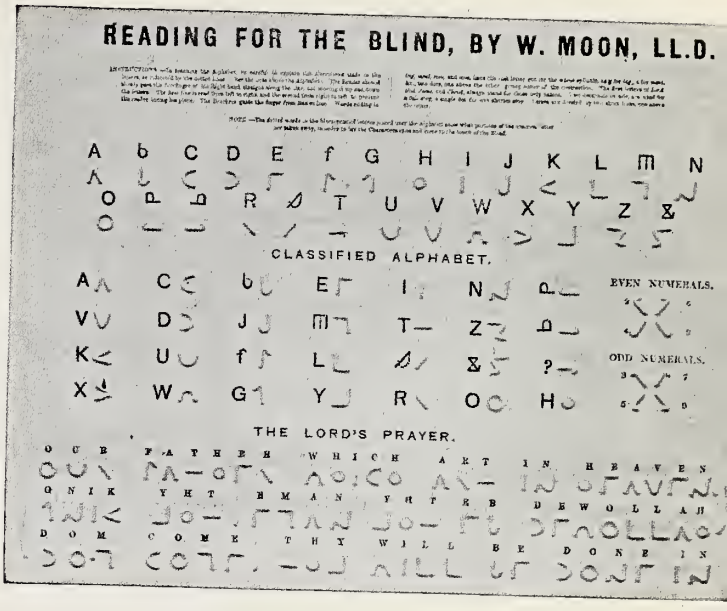
In 1927 I told one of our leading contributors, an enthusiastic Moon reader, about my great desire to see Moon type published in America. I had found someone capable of making the experiment, and this lady contributor offered to send me a cheque for $500. but I had such confidence in the printer that I asked her to make her cheque direct to him, which she did. The result was excellent, and I exhibited the first production of Moon type stereotyped and embossed in America at the First Week for the Blind, held in Philadelphia in March 1928. We planned for a magazine after he had consulted with the late Mr. Walter G. Holmes, then Manager for the Ziegler Magazine for the Blind in New York, who came several times to Philadelphia to watch the process. However, the printer's health failed and he went into bankruptcy. Mr. Holmes went to the Receiver in Bankruptcy but the decision had already been made to melt down the dies and sell the lead.

The specimen dies which I had given to the printer, I had brought from Brighton, England. Fortunately, I had reserved a few, and gave them to Mr. Holmes and to Mr. J. Robert Atkinson, the present head of The Braille Institute of America, Los Angeles, California.

Before long the Ziegler Magazine was publishing a free gift magazine, and Mr. Atkinson was also publishing a magazine, both of which are still issued in Moon type (1948).

During my term of office I prepared three catalogues of all embossed books owned by The Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society, which the Free Library of Philadelphia was circulating. The last one included a gift I had obtained of 147 volumes in French Braille, including a French Grammar. This last catalogue was printed in 1932 and consisted of 24 pages, and did not include obsolete embossed types. In 1927 the Society printed my brief history of the Society. In 1933 I resigned from the Society to give my entire time to my Blind Relief Fund of Philadelphia which I started in 1909.

In 1932 Dr. Jane M. Jenks Southryn, a personal friend of mine purchased 40 new Moon type books from Brighton and presented them to our library. Her deep interest in the work was proved by her leaving in her will over $24,000. FOR THE ENDOWMENT FUND FOR MOON TYPE BOOKS; The legacy was paid to the Pennsylvania Home Teaching Society in 1947.



Invented by William Moon, LL D.; F.R.G.S.
GOLD MEDALS AWARDED
Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri, 1904
Imperial International Exhibition, Great White City, Shepherd's Bush London, W. England, 1905
Jamestown Ter-Centennial Exposition. Hampton Roads, Virginia, 1907
Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition Medal of Honour, 1926

To give one instance among thousands of what the Moon type has meant to those losing their sight in adult life, I will tell you one true story.

Years ago I was asked to call on a Civil War veteran, 95 years of age, totally blind and unable to leave his room. He lived in the eastern part of Pennsylvania. The Major

was graciousness itself, and after some general conversation I talked a little about the pleasure of reading. I placed his index finger on a paper and I asked him what letter it was. "Why. O, of course!"

"Well, if you can feel that letter, you can read again."

"Nonsense, you can't teach old dogs new tricks."

"Doesn't that depend largely on the *dog,* Major?"

We both had a good laugh, and the Major at 95 learned Moon type in one free lesson. He never borrowed books, but insisted on purchasing them direct from the Moon Publishing House, Brighton, England.

I never saw the Major after that one visit. Five years later I received a telegram asking me to attend his funeral. I had been selected by his daughter (whom I had never seen) to drape the United States flag over his coffin before it left the house for a military funeral.

The Major's daughter showed me a big pile of Moon type books. She thanked me warmly for having brought reading back into her father's life, and assured me that it had been a great joy to him and a great comfort to her. Later she sent all the books to me, and I placed them in the Free Library of Philadelphia, Department for the Blind.

Over 40 years of experience has convinced me that Moon type will always fill a great need of the thousands of elderly people unable to read a dotted system. New books are published every month in Brighton, England, and two excellent magazines are obtainable from New York and Los Angeles, where they are embossed.

I cannot stress too strongly the great need of informing the adult blind of Moon type. It is so simple that no Home Teacher is necessary, asd I will be glad to send an alphabet to any one sending the name and address of a blind person who is not yet reading Moon type.

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1525	9	"	6	"	"
1526	9⅛	"	7⅛	"	"
1527	10⅛	"	7⅛	"	"
1528	11	"	8	"	"

	HIGH		WIDE		THICKNESS
1529	12	inches	10	inches	½ inch
1530	12	"	9⅛	"	"
1532	13	"	10	"	"
1533	14	"	11	"	"
1534	16	"	12	"	"

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